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Prisoner Gives Story Of the Bay of Pigs

By HUMBERTO SANCHEZ
MIAMI, Fla., Dec. 24 (AP). —

Bad luck wrecked our invasion of Playa Giron. Air support would have helped. But with a couple of good breaks we could have gone all the way, planes or not.

Misfortune was far from my mind, from the time of enlistment in March, 1961, to the morning of the invasion on April 17.

I was with the 5th Battalion aboard the freighter Houston. We had shipped April 14 from Puerto Cabeza, Nicaragua, and were in Cuban waters by 7 p.m., April 16.

Our attack got under way before dawn, but for some reason we could not get our launches away from the Houston until the sun was up.

We Were Sitting Ducks

The bad luck with the small boats was compounded when the first enemy aircraft arrived. We thought the B-26 coming over us was friendly. It waggled its wings. We waved back. He dived and fired into our launches. We were sitting ducks after that.

The B-26 was joined by armed jet fighters and the British Sea Furies. All we had in the way of anti-aircraft were four 50-caliber machine guns. One was down.

Our decks were loaded with high-octane gas and before long all our supplies were either afire or severely damaged. Then bombs put a list to the Houston. We lost about 30 men by drowning or straggling as we swam ashore.

I was wounded slightly in the left arm and found no

Humberto Sanchez, 28, was an enlisted man in the Cuban armed forces under Fulgencio Batista, the deposed dictator. He left his homeland when Fidel Castro took over. A member of the Bay of Pigs invasion force, he was released yesterday. This is his story.

trouble getting to the beach. With all our difficulties our troops reached their assigned objectives in the first few hours of attack.

We did well, regardless of what is said. My estimate is that Castro's army suffered about 1,800 dead. Their militia was not very well trained.

Militia Women in Truck

Once some militia women showed up in a truck and started firing at us. Well, this is war. We blasted them with a single bazooka shell.

It was inevitable that the men would come, for most of our equipment and supplies were either destroyed or in the water. The battle was over in 72 hours after their long-range artillery started pounding us to pieces.

I hid for 11 days, helped by friendly peasants. On the morning of April 28 I was picked up and brought to Havana by car, winding up eventually in Principe prison, which was to be my home for the next 20 months.

Treatment at Principe was bestial and humiliating. We weren't beaten up, but the psychological torture and humiliations were worse.

We learned we were to be released on the 22d and were

very happy. Some of Castro's own guards were sympathetic toward us. "Now you're going to eat beef steak and have shoes. Don't forget us," they would say. We were so sorry for them.

They came for us at Principe yesterday at 1 p.m. A few relatives were outside and they yelled and waved.

Outside the prison, I was appalled at the lack of traffic and the large number of big stores closed. We were taken south to the San Antonio Airbase and were able to see the Socialist propaganda plastered everywhere.

We were surprised to receive cheers from peasants in the smaller towns. The reception at San Antonio was even noisier. But the guards up front merely looked at each other. Near the airbase, some of us gave our shoes to people who begged for them.

An San Antonio, we also saw young men who were obviously either Russians, or Eastern Europeans. They were in civilian clothes.

We boarded our plane finally at 8 p.m. for the United States. We were emotionally exhausted and hungry. We ate sandwiches, our first good meal in nearly two years.

It's grand to be here, but I'm ready to go back anytime I'm wanted. We learned unity in prison and we must never lose that.